MARVEL SELECT

#3
OCT

SPIDER-MAN

THE LOST YEARS

DEMATTEIS
ROMITA JR.
JANSON

JRJR
+
JANSON

STAN LEE PRESENTS:
SPIDER-MAN
THE LOST YEARS

AFTER ALL THE INSANITY I'D LIVED THROUGH IN THE YEARS AFTER MILES WARREN *CLONED* ME FROM PETER PARKER'S CELLS...

...I DIDN'T THINK ANYTHING COULD SHOCK ME.

YET THERE I WAS, ON THE ROOF OF THAT SALT LAKE CITY WAREHOUSE -- FACE PRESSED AGAINST THE GLASS, EYES WIDE WITH SURPRISE...

...AND COLD HORROR.

PART THREE:
THE TRUTH

NOT BECAUSE OF THE PAIN THAT WAS EXPLODING THROUGH MY NERVE-ENDINGS.

NOT BECAUSE MY CELL STRUCTURE HAD SUDDENLY DEGENERATED -- TURNING ME INTO A HIDEOUS CARICATURE OF A MAN.

NO, THOSE THINGS I COULD ENDURE. OR AT LEAST I COULD *LEARN* TO.

BUT THE SIGHT OF *LOUISE KENNEDY* -- POINTING A GUN AT *BEN REILLY'S* HEAD...

...WHILE MOB-BOSS *VINCENT TANNEN* AND HIS SYCOPHANT NEPHEW LOOKED ON...

...*THAT* WAS TOO *MUCH* TO TAKE.

SO --

-- *THIS* IS THE SCUM WHO'S BEEN SCREWING UP OUR OPERATION?

DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH TO *ME*.

BLOW HIS *BRAINS* OUT.

NO.

NOT IN FRONT OF THE *BOY*.

YOU'LL DO WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO. WHAT I *PAY* YOU TO DO.

MATTHEW RAVEN'S EYES BUGGED OUT WHEN HE HEARD THAT.

SO WAS *MINE.*

GET THE BOY OUT OF HERE.

HE DOESN'T HAVE TO SEE THIS.

LOUISE WAS A POLICE DETECTIVE. HIS FATHER'S *PARTNER*. SHE COULDN'T *POSSIBLY* BE ON TANNEN'S PAYROLL.

HIS MIND WAS RACING... SEARCHING FOR OTHER EXPLANATIONS.

A SOFT SPOT FOR KIDS, Huh?

I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.

I'VE GOT THREE OF MY **OWN.**

TAKE HIM BACK TO MY PLACE, *"MOUTH."*

AND TRY NOT TO SCREW THIS UP LIKE YOU DO EVERYTHING *ELSE.*

S-SURE THING, UNC. *SURE THING.*

-:*SIGH*:-
YOU *KNOW* YOUR LITTLE FRIEND'S GONNA END UP AS DEAD AS HIS *MOTHER*. RAVEN'S GOTTA PAY FOR WHAT HE DID TO THE *ORGANIZATION.*

BUT MATTHEW'S SO YOUNG. HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHA --

UNTIL THAT MOMENT I WASN'T SURE. SHE *COULD* HAVE BEEN UNDERCOVER. THE WHOLE THING *COULD* HAVE BEEN A SETUP TO PUT THE FINAL NAIL IN TANNEN'S COFFIN.

DON'T *ARGUE* WITH ME --

-- JUST PULL THE *TRIGGER.*

YES, SIR.

KLICK

BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING IN HER VOICE, IN HER EYES. A HUNGER... A *BLOODLUST*... I KNEW ALL TOO WELL.

LOUISE!

I THOUGHT SHE'D WRESTLED WITH *HER* DEMONS AND WON; CHANNELED *HER* PAIN INTO A LIFE OF SERVICE TO THE *LAW*..

I THOUGHT SHE WAS MY *HOPE*.

WHEN I HELD LOUISE IN MY ARMS -- I WAS CLINGING TO MY OWN *SALVATION*.

BUT THAT NIGHT I REALIZED, WITH UTTER FINALITY, WHAT A *FOOL* I'D BEEN. HOPE AND SALVATION WERE ILLUSIONS.

AND LOVE --

LOVE WAS THE BIGGEST LIE OF *ALL*.

YOU BETRAYED ME!

KAINE --

KAINE... WHAT IN GOD'S NAME HAS *HAPPENED* TO YOU? WHY ARE YOU --

AND I'M GOING TO *KILL* YOU FOR IT!

NO!

REILLY?

STAY *OUT* OF THIS!!

I'd started to regain consciousness a few minutes earlier, but I'd been too weak, too badly beaten, to move.

The joke of it is, Kaine probably saved my life by coming back when he did.

So why was I risking my neck trying to save the woman who'd been about to murder me?

I don't know if I was. In some crazy way...

...I think I was trying to save him.

Maybe it was the connection we shared -- the fact that Kaine was created from my genetic matrix -- or maybe it was just intuition...

...but I sensed that, if he did this, if he killed Louise Kennedy...

...he'd be killing a part of himself. The BEST part.

KRESSH

And there'd be no turning back.

WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN?!

WHY WON'T YOU --

I TOLD YOU... TO STAY OUT OF THIS!

AKK

Back then I didn't know Kaine was my clone -- an imperfect clone, diseased and dying.

I just knew he was in pain and that -- against all logic -- I wanted to HELP him.

But I COULDN'T. Not with Matthew Raven out there...

FUT FUT FUT FUT FUT FUT

SKREE

GET IN.

BUT, KAINE...HE'S GONNA --

GET IN THE CAR.

NOW.

HEY!

HEY -- COME BACK!

Y'CAN'T JUST LEAVE ME HERE WITH THIS STUPID --

LET THE BOY GO.

... in that vulture's hands.

SKRUD

ROOSH

IT'S ALL RIGHT, MATTHEW.

DON'T BE AFRAID.

I WON'T HURT YOU.

I SWEAR TO GOD I WON'T.

I SWEAR TO GOD.

MY SON WAS GONE.

TAKEN FROM THE HOSPITAL WHERE HE'D BEEN FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE.

IT WAS TANNEN'S DOING, I KNEW IT. JUST LIKE IT WAS TANNEN WHO KILLED HELENE.

BUT I WASN'T ANGRY AT TANNEN. OR AT THE GUARDS WHO SHOULD HAVE DONE A BETTER JOB OF PROTECTING MY BOY.

IT WAS GOD I HELD RESPONSIBLE. GOD I RAGED AT. GOD I CURSED.

ALL MY LIFE, I TOLD HIM, IN THE SILENCE OF MY SOUL, I TRUSTED YOU. KEPT *FAITH* WITH YOU.

ALL MY LIFE!

AND THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY ME? BY TAKING THE THINGS I TREASURE MOST? BY BREAKING MY HEART, SHATTERING MY SPIRIT?

WELL, IF *THAT'S* THE KIND OF GOD YOU ARE... THEN I *RENOUNCE* YOU! I TURN MY BACK ON YOU!

BUT, EVEN AS THOSE WORDS FORMED, I **KNEW** THEY WERE LIES. KNEW THAT... EVEN IN THIS HORRIBLE DARKNESS... I STILL HELD ON TO A SMALL, FLICKERING LIGHT...

...OF *FAITH.*

MATTHEW?

POPPA!

THAT'S *TWICE* YOU'VE SAVED ME. WHO *ARE* YOU? WHY ARE --

VINCENT TANNEN'S NOT IN JAIL.

IMPOSSIBLE! HE'S LOCKED UP TIGHTER THAN--

I *SAW* HIM TONIGHT. BIG AS LIFE.

AN' *AUNT LOUISE* WAS THERE, TOO, POPPA.

KENNEDY? IS SHE --?

SHE'S --

SHE'S FINE, *DETECTIVE RAVEN.*

NOW YOU TAKE GOOD CARE OF THAT *BOY.*

THANK YOU.

Maybe I should have told him the truth about his partner.

But after all he'd been through, all he'd lost, I just couldn't do it.

So I aimed my aching body away from the hospital -- and straight toward the only safe haven I HAD in Salt Lake.

NOK NOK

Toward the woman I trusted. The woman I loved.

Oh, MY GOD -- !

J-J --

-- JANINE --

I'd been running on adrenaline for hours...

BEN!

...and the tank had finally hit empty.

BEN... DON'T WORRY. I'M HERE.

WHATEVER'S HAPPENED, I'LL TAKE *CARE* OF YOU.

JUST REST NOW, SWEET MAN.

REST.

I PROMISE YOU --

-- I WON'T LEAVE.

Ohhh...

...HOW LONG... HAVE I BEEN OUT?

'BOUT AN HOUR. HOW DO YOU FEEL?

JUST GREAT. NEVER BEEN BETTER. WANNA... GO OUT DANCING OR SOMETHING?

MIND TELLING ME WHAT *HAPPENED* TO YOU?

LONG STORY.

I'VE GOT PLENTY OF TIME.

I--

I CAN'T.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T? DON'T YOU *TRUST* ME?

I did trust her. And I WANTED to tell her. Wanted to get it ALL out... the whole horrible story.

But I was certain that, if I did... if she found out that Ben Reilly was a wall-crawling freak (worse: the CLONE of a wall-crawling freak!)...

...she'd walk out the door and never come back.

JANINE... I JUST CAN'T. THERE ARE THINGS THAT --

HEY --

-- YOUR *BAGS* ARE PACKED.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

WHERE. DOESN'T MATTER. I JUST -- I HAVE TO LEAVE.

WHAT? WHEN WILL YOU BE BACK?

I'M NOT COMING BACK.

AND YOU WERE JUST GOING TO GO -- WITHOUT TELLING ME? WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE?

WHY?

I CAN'T EXPLAIN. IT'S TOO... COMPLICATED.

A LITTLE WHILE AGO, YOU PROMISED ME YOU WOULDN'T LEAVE. NOW YOU'RE WALKIN OUT THE DOOR AND OUT OF MY *LIFE?*

DON'T MAKE THIS HARDER THAN IT ALREADY IS.

JANINE... *WAIT* --

I LOVE YOU.

AND I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING... *EVERYTHING*... I *SWEAR* IT --

-- BUT IT HAS TO WORK BOTH WAYS.

I LOVE YOU IN A WAY I'VE NEVER LOVED ANY WOMAN BEFORE.

MY NAME --

-- ISN'T JANINE GODBE. IT'S ELIZABETH. *ELIZABETH TYNE* --

-- AND --

-- I'M A *MURDERER.*

I FOUND OUT LATER THAT LOUISE HAD HERSELF *COVERED* THE NIGHT RAVEN'S HOUSE WAS BOMBED.

ACE G & B'S

MY BROTHER *TRUSTED* ME!

IT WAS ALL ARRANGED THAT SHE'D BUST TANNEN'S NEPHEW, JIMMY "THE MOUTH" -- AND THEN GET HIM OFF LATER ON A TECHNICALITY.

THIS WAY IF ANYONE WANTED TO KNOW WHERE SHE WAS WHEN HER PARTNER'S HOUSE WENT UP -- SHE HAD AN AIR-TIGHT ALIBI: SHE WAS BUSTING THE VERY LOWLIFES THAT *DID* IT.

PROBLEM WAS, JIMMY GOT HIMSELF TOO DRUNK TO MAKE IT. SO HE SENT HIS PAL *DUKE* INSTEAD.

AND LOOK AT WHAT I'VE DONE WITH THAT TRUST!

ONLY HE FORGOT TO FILL DUKE IN ON THE DETAILS.

LOOK AT WHAT I'VE DONE TO *HIM!*

KRAAKH

SO DUKE AND HIS BOYS WERE READY TO WASTE LOUISE WHEN I CAME CRASHING IN TO SAVE THE DAY LIKE A HERO. LIKE A FOOL. LIKE...

...BEN REILLY.

THE COPS ARE ALL OVER THAT WARE-HOUSE.

WE LOST THE BOY.

WE LOST *EVERY-THING!*

YOU'VE LOST BEFORE. BUT THE TANNENS ALWAYS COME BACK. *ALWAYS.*

TELL THAT TO MY BROTHER -- ROTTING THERE IN PRISON.

SHE WAS LYING TO ME FROM THE START. AND I EMBRACED HER LIES... HELD TIGHT TO THEM... LIKE MY LIFE DEPENDED ON IT.

AND MAYBE IT *DID.*

Mr. TANNEN... *PAUL*... YOU NEED TO *REGROUP*. GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR BROTHER AND --

MY BROTHER. YOU THINK HE'LL EVEN TALK TO ME AFTER THE *MESS* I MADE OF THINGS? WHEN HE KNEW HE WAS GOING TO JAIL HE CALLED ME IN BOSTON... ASKED ME TO COME RUN THINGS FOR HIM.

"VINCE, I CAN'T," I SAID. "I'M A LEGITIMATE BUSINESSMAN. IF I GET INVOLVED IN THIS --"

"I'M YOUR BROTHER," HE SAID. "I'M *FAMILY* -- AND I *NEED* YOU."

HOW COULD I SAY NO? WE'RE *TWINS*. LIKE *ONE SOUL* IN TWO DIFFERENT *BODIES*.

HOW COULD I SAY NO?

Oh, YES -- I WAS QUITE THE HERO. RESCUED THE DAMSEL IN DISTRESS.

WELL, I'M HOLDING YOU RESPONSIBLE -- YOU HEAR ME?

YOU GOT ON THE PAYROLL BECAUSE YOU WERE ON THE INSIDE! YOU *SWORE* YOU COULD STOP THIS KIND OF THING FROM *HAPPENING*.

AND THAT NIGHT I INTENDED TO RESCUE HER...

...TIME...

...ONE...

...LAST...

SNAKT

KAINE --!

...SO I COULD HAVE THE PLEASURE OF KILLING HER *MYSELF*.

D-DON'T MAKE ME *SHOOT* YOU, KAINE. I... I DON'T *WANT* TO.

WHATEVER'S GONE WRONG CAN'T CHANGE WHAT WE'VE SHARED. CAN'T CHANGE THE FACT --

-- THAT I LOVE YOU.

LOVE. LOVE IS A LIE. I KNEW IT THEN. I KNOW IT STILL.

BUT WHEN SHE SPOKE THOSE WORDS...

...THOSE WORDS THAT NO OTHER LIVING SOUL HAD EVER SAID TO ME...

...MY RAGE JUST... MELTED. AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY BRIEF LIFE...

...I WEPT.

THIS IS HARD FOR ME, BEN. I... I'VE NEVER TOLD *ANYONE* THIS BEFORE.

TRUTH IS... I DIDN'T KNOW IT *MYSELF* FOR A LONG TIME.

SOMETIMES... THERE ARE THINGS THAT ARE SO TERRIBLE THAT THE MIND CAN'T *CONTAIN* THEM. SO WE JUST PUSH THE MEMORIES AWAY.

PRETEND IT NEVER *HAPPENED.*

"BUT IT *DID* HAPPEN.

"ALMOST EVERY NIGHT OF MY LIFE, FROM THE TIME I WAS A LITTLE GIRL --

"-- IT *HAPPENED.*"

"I MOVED AWAY. I GOT A JOB. I MADE A LIFE.

"AND THEN, SLOWLY AT FIRST, I STARTED TO ***REMEMBER***... THE DISGUSTING THINGS MY ***OWN FATHER*** HAD BEEN ***DOING*** TO ME, NIGHT AFTER HORRIBLE NIGHT... TILL I WAS SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD.

"AND THEN ALL THE RAGE I'D DENIED FOR SO MANY YEARS --

"-- CAME ROARING OUT."

AND I RAN.

AND I'VE *BEEN* RUNNING --

-- EVER SINCE.

JANINE -- !

HOW CAN YOU *HOLD* ME LIKE THIS?

D-DON'T YOU *HATE* ME? DON'T I *DISGUST* YOU?

I LOVE YOU.

BUT HOW... HOW CAN YOU *POSSIBLY* LOVE SOMEONE LIKE ME?

FUNNY.

I COULD ASK YOU THE SAME THING.

And that's when...

... I told her.

WHY?

WHY ALLY YOURSELF WITH A MAGGOT LIKE TANNEN?

YOU -- WERE MY LIGHT... SHINING IN THE DARKNESS.

THE TANNENS OF THE WORLD -- -- THEY *ARE* THE DARKNESS. AND, IN THE END, THE DARKNESS ALWAYS *WINS*.

Ah, KAINE... KAINE... *KAINE* --

-- YOU TRULY DON'T *UNDERSTAND*, DO YOU?

SO MANY YEARS OF FIGHTING AGAINST IT -- AND I FINALLY REALIZED WHAT AN *IDIOT* I WAS.

WHY FIGHT... WHEN YOU CAN *SURRENDER* TO IT... *GLORY* IN IT?

BUT, YOU --

-- WERE MY ONLY HOPE.

AND IN AN ODD WAY -- -- YOU WERE *MINE*, TOO.

EVEN THEN I WANTED TO CALL OUT TO HER... BEG HER NOT TO LEAVE ME.

BUT I'D HUMILIATED MYSELF ENOUGH. EVEN *PROFESSOR WARREN* HADN'T MADE ME FEEL SO SMALL, SO... RIDICULOUS.

THEN WHY DID I CLING TO THOSE FEELINGS; *EXULT* IN THEM? WHY DID I DRINK FROM MY CUP OF SHAME SLOWLY... *RELISHING* EACH SMALL SIP?

PERHAPS BECAUSE THE SOURCE OF MY SHAME WAS *HER*. THE ONLY LOVE I'D EVER KNOWN. THE ONLY LOVE I EVER *WOULD* KNOW. AND I WANTED TO SAVOR EVEN THE *DREGS* OF THAT LOVE...

...BEFORE I DESTROYED HER.

I'D BEEN CHECKING AND RE-CHECKING THE FACTS FOR MONTHS...

...SINCE I FIRST STUMBLED ONTO THE POSSIBLE CONNECTION BETWEEN JANINE GODBE AND ELIZABETH TYNE.

AND I WAS FINALLY SURE THEY WERE THE SAME WOMAN.

I KNEW JANINE. LIKED HER. MY GUT TOLD ME SHE WASN'T THE KILLING KIND. BUT IN THE END -- THAT WAS FOR THE LAW TO DECIDE.

GOD AND THE LAW: THEY'RE THE ONLY THINGS WE CAN DEPEND ON IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE...

...AREN'T ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM.

JAKE..?

LOU --! YOU ALL RIGHT?

WHY WOULDN'T I BE?

MATTHEW SAID YOU WERE AT THE McKENNA WAREHOUSE TONIGHT. AND THAT VINCENT TANNEN WAS THERE, TOO.

NOT VINCE... HIS BROTHER, PAUL. AND I ALMOST HAD HIM, JAKE.

BUT... ah... A COUPLE OF TANNEN'S BOYS GOT CRAZY... ALMOST TORE THE PLACE APART. TANNEN AND "THE MOUTH" TOOK OFF.

BUT, DON'T WORRY -- I'LL NAIL THEIR SORRY BUTTS.

ACTUALLY... "THE MOUTH'S" ALREADY IN CUSTODY.

WHAT? WHO BUSTED HIM?

THE SAME MYSTERY MAN WHO BROUGHT MATTHEW BACK -- AND SAVED ME FROM TANNEN'S GOONS.

"MOUTH" HAVE ANYTHING... INTERESTING TO SAY?

NOTHING YET. JUST WHINING FOR HIS LAWYER.

BUT I CAN'T WORRY ABOUT JIMMY RIGHT NOW.

I'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF THE GODBE SITUATION.

NOW?

WHY NOT?

THEN I'M GOING WITH YOU.

LOOKING BACK, I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY SHE CAME. IF SHE WAS THE VILLAIN THE PAPERS MADE HER OUT TO BE, SHE SHOULD HAVE RUN.

BUT THAT'S THE THING ABOUT PEOPLE...

...THEY'RE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM.

TELLING her my incredible tale was one thing...

...but I had to give Janine some concrete proof that I wasn't just some... delusional LUNATIC.

So we crawled a few walls, leaped tall buildings in single bounds. I trotted out the whole repertoire.

OKAY! OKAY! OKAY!

I think she BELIEVED me.

Which wasn't necessarily a good thing.

SO... um... YOU'RE A CLONE..?

Uh-huh.

OF A MAN WHO CLIMBS UP THE SIDES OF BUILDINGS AND GETS INTO FIST-FIGHTS WITH GUYS NAMED *ELECTRO* AND *DOCTOR OCTOPUS*?

Uh-huh.

I could tell, from the look in her eyes, what she was thinking:

I was a hideous freak. A crime against nature. A repulsive, inhuman THING.

I watched her walk away from me, walk out of my life, certain she would never want to set eyes on me again.

HEY... SPIDER-MAN --

-- WHY ARE YOU STANDING THERE LIKE A JERK?

YOU MEAN YOU --?

I LOVE YOU, BEN REILLY --

-- WHO-EVER YOU ARE.

Guess I wasn't much of a mind reader.

THANK GOD.

HOW DID HE MANAGE IT?

STRIPPED OF HIS IDENTITY... YEARS ON THE RUN, LIVING LIKE THE SHADOW OF THE SHADOW OF A MAN...

...AND *STILL* HE FOUND HAPPINESS. FOUND *LOVE*.

MY CELLS BURNED. MY HEART WAS TORN TO SHREDS. I KNEW NOTHING BUT COLD RAGE AND BLIND HATRED.

PROFESSOR WARREN WOULD HAVE BEEN *PROUD*.

AT LONG LAST HIS "SON..."

...WAS REACHING HIS FULL POTENTIAL.

Janine and I hopped on my bike and headed East...

...toward a very uncertain future.

But it WAS a future, now that we were together. And that's more than either of us had before.

Half an hour out of Salt Lake we realized we'd better get some food in us; so we stopped at a greasy little diner, got some burgers to go.

And that's when things started to UNRAVEL.

ELIZABETH --

-- TIME TO STOP RUNNING.

BEN... DON'T LET THEM. PLEASE.

I SAVED YOUR LIFE, DETECTIVE RAVEN. AND I SAVED YOUR SON'S.

EXIT REST ROOMS

SO MAYBE YOU'LL BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL YOU WHAT JANINE DID WAS AN ACT OF DESPERATION. SHE'S THE INNOCENT ONE HERE.

YES! THE ONE WHO BROUGHT MATTHEW BA --

NO! HE WAS THERE AT THE WARE-HOUSE TONIGHT! HE'S ONE OF TANNEN'S GOONS!

THE MAN SHE KILLED WAS THE CRIMINAL.

IT'S --

-- HIM!

LOUISE -- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Kennedy was losing it. She knew I could expose her duplicity to Raven...

JANINE -- GET OUT... NOW!

BUT --

GO!

...and, the way my spider-sense was buzzing, she had every intention of KILLING me...

...to prevent that from happening.

SWAK

But I'd already BEEN killed once -- I watched Peter Parker die; watched his entire world die WITH him -- and there was no way on God's green Earth...

... that I was going to die AGAIN.

I'LL ONLY SAY THIS ONCE, DETECTIVE:

LEAVE US ALONE.

We headed for the mountains...

...Janine's fear -- and my anger -- pushing us up those treacherous slopes.

But the further on we rode, the more I wondered if we were doing the right thing. What I said to Raven earlier was true:

Janine WASN'T a cold-blooded killer. What she did was an act of desperation -- by a lost and broken soul.

What if we went back? I suggested; told them the whole story --

But Janine wouldn't hear it.

YOU SAW THEM, BEN. THEY'RE NOT INTERESTED IN THE TRUTH.

THEY'RE OUT FOR --

--BLOOD--!

WHUPF

REILLY!

I'M GOING TO

YOU.

TOMPF

SORRY, KAINE --

CHUP

KILL

-- I'VE GOT SOME-THING --

TUK

-- BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THREE LONG YEARS --

-- SOME-ONE --

STRAK

--TO LIVE FOR!

LOUISE -- SLOW DOWN --

-- I'M NOT EXACTLY IN *SHAPE* FOR THIS!

I THINK I REALIZED THE TRUTH THE MOMENT SHE PULLED HER GUN IN THE DINER. ALL THE LITTLE DETAILS I'D CONSCIOUSLY PUSHED AWAY IN THE PRECEDING MONTHS CAME TOGETHER WITH APPALLING CLARITY.

*AND I KNEW THAT MY PARTNER, MY BEST FRIEND, HAD BETRAYED EVERYTHING SHE ONCE **BELIEVED** IN.*

BUT I STILL REFUSED TO BELIEVE...

YOU TAKE YOUR TIME, JAKE --

-- I'LL GO ON *AHEAD*.

NO... *WAIT!*

THERE ARE... *THINGS* -- WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT!

YOU'RE RIGHT. AND WE WILL TALK ABOUT THEM.

AFTER THIS IS *OVER*.

...THAT SHE'D BETRAYED *ME*.

WHY DO YOU KEEP FIGHTING, REILLY?

WHY DO YOU REFUSE TO LAY DOWN IN DEFEAT AND *DIE* -- LIKE THE WHIPPED DOG YOU ARE?

KAINE -- FOR GOD'S SAKE -- THERE'S NO *REASON* FOR THIS!

YOU'RE IN TERRIBLE PAIN! ANYONE CAN *SEE* THAT!

LET ME *HELP* YOU!

A GOOD MAN TILL THE VERY END -- Eh, BEN?

I THINK KILLING YOU WILL ACTUALLY BE AN ACT OF MERCY! BECAUSE EVENTUALLY, INEVITABLY --

-- A MAN LIKE YOU WILL BE CRIPPLED... AND BROKEN --

-- BY THIS CRUEL AND HEARTLESS --

-- WORLD?!

THAT'S WHEN I SAW HER -- AND MY BLOOD FROZE. BECAUSE, IN THAT AWFUL MOMENT, I KNEW...

SWAK

...THAT I COULD REALLY DO IT.

YOU'RE DEAD, MISTER -- DO YOU HEAR ME?!

DEAD AND --

THAT I *WOULD* DO IT.

KRAKOW

TOKKF

AND THE PAIN AND THE SHAME AND THE HORRIBLE JOY OF IT...

SNAK!

...WOULD HAUNT ME...

...TORMENT ME...

AAAAHHHHH

...FOR THE REST OF MY WRETCHED LIFE.

Janine told me that Kaine grabbed Kennedy's gun then; started to squeeze the trigger. "What's he going to do?" She wondered. "Kill her AGAIN?"

He was so far gone, I don't think even HE knew.

SSSSSSSS

But as I came to, something lit up in his eyes; some dark inspiration.

And that was the first time I ever saw the horrible, disfiguring BURN that they call...

FAP

...THE MARK OF KAINE.

I was about to go AFTER him...

...when things got even more complicated.

HOLD IT!

EITHER ONE OF YOU MOVES A MUSCLE... I'LL SHOOT TO KILL!

THAT'S MY PARTNER LYING DEAD ON THE GROUND! MY FRIEND!

I KNOW WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE, DETECTIVE, BUT IT WASN'T US! I SWEAR TO GOD IT WA --

SHUT UP!

NOW GET YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR.

DETECTIVE RAVEN -- YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH HELL THIS PAST WEEK. AND I'M TRULY *SORRY.*

BUT YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT KIND OF HELL *JANINE* HAS BEEN THROUGH.

JUST REMEMBER THAT IF I *WAS* A KILLER --

CMAK

AND *ME?* IF THE POLICE EVER FOUND OUT WHO I REALLY WAS --

-- TOO MANY GOOD AND DECENT PEOPLE WOULD BE HURT.

-- YOU'D BE DEAD RIGHT NOW --

-- INSTEAD OF *UNCONSCIOUS.*

WELL... *NOW* WHAT?

NOW?

I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T REALLY CARE.

AS LONG AS I'M WITH *YOU.*

The fingerprints Kaine left on Louise Kennedy's gun would come back to HAUNT me two years later, but that day we weren't thinking about the future.

We were just holding tight to one another. Holding tight to LOVE.

The truth is...

...it's the only thing in life...

RIP
LOUISE KENNEDY

...WORTH holding on to.

I think Jacob Raven would agree with me that, even in the midst of the most incomprehensible tragedies, simple human love -- is a blessing.

A MIRACLE.

During the difficult months that followed, Janine showed me how to LIVE that miracle.

In the end we couldn't hold on to it. In the end... I LOST her.

But I'll TREASURE the miracle we shared, CLING to it...

...to HER...

...till the day I DIE.

THE END

Five years ago...

Ben Reilly — a man formerly known as both **Peter Parker** and **Spider-Man,** until those identities were stolen from him by a vengeful enemy — has been waging a one-man war on Salt Lake City's ruthless druglord, **Vincent Tannen.** This war has been violently interrupted by **Kaine,** Reilly's imperfect clone, whose obsessive curiosity with Reilly has turned to full-blown, murderous hate...and by Kaine's erstwhile lover, **Louise Kennedy,** a corrupt police officer on Tannen's payroll, whose treachery has just become evident.

Now the players are all in place, and the stage is set for the unforgettable conclusion to the saga of Spider-Man's secret past.

Not all endings are happy ones...

[redacted]